

REMARKS

Office Action

In the Office Action mailed August 9, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Baader et al., US Published Application 2006/0129538 (hereinafter "Baader"). For reasons set forth more fully below, Applicants submit the claims as amended are patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 1 and 5-9

Claim 1, as amended, requires a method for ranking documents according to a subject matter expertise of the authors. The method determines the subject matter expertise of the authors by counting the number of times that an author is identified in a cluster of electronic documents formed in accordance with a user request for documents related to a particular subject matter. Thus, the ranking for an author computed by this method is directly related to the number of documents written by the author that were collected in the cluster of documents. The method set forth in this claim, therefore, collects documents corresponding to a particular subject and then identifies the number of documents attributed to each author of the documents in the collection. Thus, the subject matter expertise of an author pertains to the context of a user's search only.

The Baader reference does not teach this limitation. Instead, the Baader reference teaches that authors are determined to be experts by consulting a database that identifies experts (Baader, ¶s 36, 73, and 86). In paragraph 73 of

the Baader reference, a reference is made to “the quantity of publications” for an author. The Examiner should note that this reference to a quantity of publications does not refer to a cluster of documents that were collected in response to a user’s query for documents related to a particular subject. Rather, the Baader reference teaches a determination of whether an author is an expert based upon personal expertise or other author information retrieved from an expertise database or from identified expertise within an enterprise. Thus, “the quantity of publications” in the Baader reference is a quantity stored in a database and not a quantity counted with reference to a cluster of search results.

Referencing stored personal data is significantly different from Applicants’ claimed invention. The method set forth in claim 1 identifies an author as an expert with reference only to the number of times the person is identified as an author of a document contained within the cluster. The method of Baader uses data gathered from outside the documents collected in a search to determine whether a person is an expert. Consequently, these methods may produce very different rankings for experts. Because the Baader reference does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 1, claim 1 is not anticipated by the Baader reference.

Moreover, the Baader reference does not render the invention of claim 1 obvious. The Baader reference does not suggest that the ranking of an author should be based solely upon the number of documents authored by a person in a cluster of documents formed in response to a user’s request for documents on a specified subject. Instead, Baader requires that the expertise of an author be

determined with reference only to personal or other author related expertise data from an expertise database. Using these previously stored data to rank an author is very different than using data based on data in documents of a cluster formed in response to a subject matter query. Consequently, claim 1 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 5-9 identify the cluster of electronic documents as being formed from some specified location. In claim 5, the cluster of documents is formed from a specified World Wide Web domain. In claim 6, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored at a specified Intranet. In claim 7, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents managed by a specified server. In claim 8, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored at a specified directory. In claim 9, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored on the World Wide Web. As each of these claims depends from claim 1, they are at least patentable for the reasons discussed above with respect to that claim. Additionally, none of the references of record teach or suggest the use of a method that counts the number of documents authored by a particular person from a cluster of documents collected from these specified locations to identify the rank of an author within the context of the results to a particular query. For at least these reasons, claims 5-9 are also patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 3 and 4

Claim 3 includes the limitations of claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Additionally, claim 3 requires that the ranking of an author be modified by also counting citations to documents written by the author in documents that are hyperlinked to the cluster of documents obtained in response to the user query on a specified subject. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the inclusion of author citations from documents hyperlinked to documents in a cluster formed in response to a user query for a particular subject. For at least these additional reasons, claim 3 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

For similar reasons, claim 4 is also patentable over the references of record. It, too, depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Moreover, it also includes the modification of an author's ranking with the number of times an author is identified as the author of a document hyperlinked to a document in a cluster of electronic documents formed in response to a user query on a particular subject. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the modification of an author's reference with the number of times an author also wrote a document hyperlinked to such a cluster of electronic documents. For at least these additional reasons, claim 4 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 10

Claim 10 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Additionally, claim 10 requires that user input specify a frequency of citation threshold and that the threshold be used to exclude an author from the ranking index. Specifically, the method of claim 10 requires that the identified author be excluded when the author's accumulated count is less than the frequency of citation threshold. The Baader reference does not include the exclusion of an author from an index formed in response to a user query. Additionally, the Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of an author from an index because the author did not write a minimum number of documents in a document cluster formed in response to a user query. Therefore, the Baader reference neither teaches nor suggests the invention of claim 10. Consequently, claim 10 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 11-13

Claim 11 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Furthermore, claim 11 requires that the method exclude from the accumulated count for an identified author, documents that are redundant in content, but stored in a different format than a document already counted for the identified author. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that are redundant in content but stored in a different format. At paragraph 73, the Baader reference does teach that the

documents authored by persons with particular expertise may be ranked higher than others with other types of expertise. Again, this expertise is determined with reference to an expertise database. Consequently, the Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that are redundant in content, but stored in a different format, from the documents represented in an accumulated count that is used to rank an author. For at least these additional reasons, claim 11 is patentable over all references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 12 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Furthermore, claim 12 requires that the method exclude from the accumulated count for an identified author, documents that are redundant in content, but stored in a repository different from the repository in which a document already counted for the identified author is stored. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that are redundant in content but stored in a different repository. At paragraph 73, the Baader reference does teach that the documents authored by persons with particular expertise may be ranked higher than others with other types of expertise. Again, this expertise is determined with reference to an expertise database. Consequently, the Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that are redundant in content, but stored in a different repository, from the documents represented in an accumulated count that is used to rank an author. For at least these additional reasons, claim 12 is patentable over all references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 13 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Furthermore, claim 13 requires that the method exclude from the accumulated count for an identified author, documents that cite documents in the cluster that have been previously counted for the identified author. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that cite documents previously counted. At paragraph 73, the Baader reference does teach that the documents authored by persons with particular expertise may be ranked higher than others with other types of expertise. Again, this expertise is determined with reference to an expertise database. Consequently, the Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of documents that cited documents previously counted from the accumulated count that is used to rank an author. For at least these additional reasons, claim 13 is patentable over all references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 14

Claim 14 depends from claim 1 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Additionally, claim 14 requires that the process form a second index for each author. The claim also requires that the second index include a count of documents within the cluster of documents that cite another document written by the identified author. Thus, this second index identifies the frequency that an author chooses to cite the author's own work. This second index may be used by the person who submitted the query to

determine whether the author is truly an expert from the perspective of others or from the author's perspective only. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the generation of a second index, much less, a second index that indicates the frequency that an author cites the author's own work.

Consequently, claim 14 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 15

Claim 15, as amended, sets forth a system for ranking documents according to subject matter expertise of the authors. The system counts the number of times that an author is identified in a cluster of documents formed in accordance with a user request for documents related to a particular subject matter. Thus, the ranking for an author computed by this method is directly related to the number of documents written by the author that are included in a cluster of documents that were collected in response to a user's request for documents on a specified subject. This system identifies a subject matter expertise for an author based only upon the particular context of a user's search.

The Baader reference does not teach this limitation. Instead, the Baader reference teaches that authors are determined to be experts by consulting a database that identifies experts (Baader, ¶¶s 36, 73, and 86). In paragraph 73 of the Baader reference, a reference is made to "the quantity of publications" for an author. As noted above, this is a stored parameter that is not changed by the results collected for a subject matter query. This type of expertise determination

is significantly different from Applicants' claimed invention. The system of claim 15 includes an author ranker that ranks authors only upon the accumulated number of times that the person is identified as an author of a document contained within the cluster. The system of Baader uses data gathered from outside the documents collected in a search to determine whether a person is an expert. Consequently, Applicants' system ranks authors of documents obtained in a search for documents on a particular subject matter very differently than the system of Baader. Because the Baader reference does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 15, claim 15 is not anticipated by the Baader reference.

Moreover, the Baader reference does not render the invention of claim 15 obvious. The Baader reference does not suggest that the ranking of an author should be based solely upon the number of documents authored by a person in a cluster of documents formed in response to a user's request for documents on a specified subject. Instead, Baader requires that the expertise of an author be determined with reference only to personal or other author related expertise data from an expertise database. Using these previously stored data to rank an author is very different than using data based on data in documents of a cluster formed in response to a subject matter query. Consequently, claim 15 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 16 depends from claim 15 and is, therefore, patentable for at least the reasons discussed with respect to that claim. Moreover, claim 16 requires that a subject matter expertise be determined by the system of claim 15 with reference to the sorting based on the accumulated number of times an identified

author wrote a document contained in the cluster. For at least this additional reason, claim 16 is patentable over all references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 19-23 identify the cluster of electronic documents as being formed from some specified location. In claim 19, the cluster of documents is formed from a specified World Wide Web domain. In claim 20, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored at a specified Intranet. In claim 21, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents managed by a specified server. In claim 22, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored at a specified directory. In claim 23, the cluster of electronic documents is formed from documents stored on the World Wide Web. As each of these claims depends from claim 15, they are at least patentable for the reasons discussed above with respect to that claim. Additionally, none of the references of record teach or suggest the use of a system that counts the number of documents authored by a particular person from a cluster of documents collected from these specified locations to identify the rank of an author within the context of the results to a particular query. For at least these reasons, claims 19-23 are also patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claims 17 and 18

Claim 17 includes the limitation of claim 15 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 15. Additionally, claim 17

requires that the author counter modify the accumulated count for an author by also counting citations to documents written by the author in documents that are hyperlinked to documents in a cluster of documents obtained in response to a user query on a specified subject. The Baader reference does not teach or suggest the inclusion of author citations from documents hyperlinked to the results found in response to a user query for a particular subject. For at least these additional reasons, claim 17 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

For similar reasons, claim 18 is also patentable over the references of record. It, too, depends from claim 15 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 15. Moreover, it also includes the modification of the accumulated total for an author with the number of times an author is identified as the author of a document hyperlinked to a document in a cluster of electronic documents formed in response to a user query on a particular subject. For at least these additional reasons, claim 18 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Claim 24

Claim 24 depends from claim 15 and is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 15. Additionally, claim 24 requires that a receiver obtain user input that specifies a frequency of citation threshold and that the threshold be used to exclude an author from the ranking index. Specifically, the method of claim 24 requires that the identified author be excluded when the

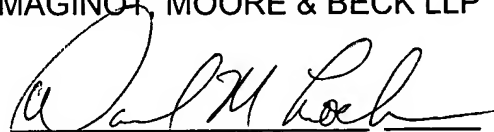
Amendment
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author's accumulated count is less than the frequency of citation threshold. The Baader reference does not include the exclusion of an author from an index formed in response to a user query. Additionally, the Baader reference does not teach or suggest the exclusion of an author from an index because the author did not write a minimum number of documents located in response to the user query. Therefore, the Baader reference neither teaches nor suggests the invention of claim 24. Consequently, claim 24 is patentable over all the references of record, either alone or in combination.

Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, pending claims 1 and 3-24 have been amended and are patentable over all references of record. Reexamination and allowance of these pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. M. Lockman", written over a horizontal line.

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